

"THE CHILDREN'S" PLEA.

"Oh ask me not of town or place—
"I think of windows, and of space.
"'Tis vain to speak of name or date—
"In June we go to coronate!

"Ask me no more, 'Rex,' to decline,
"No loyal child could be 'supine.'
"My lessons really must abate
"In June, when we shall coronate!

"The equinoxes, too, 'process?'
"I am to wear my new best dress,
"And see the town illuminate
"In June, when all things coronate!

"My brother Teddy has a 'coach'—
"Will he with horses eight approach,
"All red and gold and fine and great,
"In June, when all things coronate?

"Flowers in families must be
"The royal family for me.
"'Agree in case' means 'equal state'
"In June, when all things coronate.

"Exams are stale—you must 'review'
"Such work as I find time to do.
"Wipe off the sums upon my slate—
"In June we go to coronate!

"So what's the use to speak of schools?
"A 'ruler' matters more than rules;
"And I will sit up really late
"In June, when all things coronate."

R. A. P.

BIRMINGHAM RAGGED SCHOOLS.

I have been much interested in watching the progress of an attempt that has been made to help slum children in one of our great cities, and in the hope that such an attempt may prove suggestive to others for such children, I am venturing to lay a short account of it before your readers. The work in question is carried on as a Sewers' Band in connection with the Church Missionary Society, and it has proved so successful that possibly some such scheme might be found workable, with modification, in connection with many branches of work among poor children—such as Bands of Hope, &c.

Of course, the idea that inspires the whole of the work of a Sewers' Band is that we are all able, however poor, to *give* something, and it is found that this idea does appeal in a very real sense to poor children. Many of the poor have great and noble ideas of giving amongst themselves, but they have little scope for giving to any class outside of their own, and now-a-days with free education, free food, free clothes, is there not a danger of the idea of giving becoming so limited, that there may be a tendency to forget that we are all members of a universal brotherhood including the whole world, and not only those who are in much the same circumstances as ourselves? I lay stress upon *giving*, because this idea is, of design, kept in view in every possible way.

The work is carried on in a large parish room and two adjoining rooms. There is a large and well-qualified band of workers, whom the interest of the work has gradually drawn together, and there are now a hundred children.

There are ten tables, two teachers to each table, and about 8—10 children, so that each child gets a good deal of individual attention, and the class does not suffer so much if one teacher is away.

The children come every Thursday during the session

(September to May), from 7 to 8-30 (this seems late, but the hour is fixed to suit the older children, many of whom work in factories). Each child pays 1d. for a card of membership, and the ages vary from 8-15. One interesting feature of the work is that the boys more than double the girls in number.

I have been present on two instruction nights and three work nights, and perhaps a description of what I have last seen may be the clearest way of describing the work.

I was introduced to a class of boys (ages 10-12), doing basket work: their interest and delight in getting the bottom of a basket flat was good to see, and one undersized, hump-backed little lad was kneeling on a form, with his breath coming and going in quick gasps, too busy even to look up. The next, a class of smaller boys, were cutting out pictures and pasting them into scrapbooks of bright coloured linen with pinked edges. Another class of lads (12-15), were doing bent iron work with interest and success. I was struck with the way in which they worked together, helping each other, and behaving quietly—a great contrast to what I had seen in the same class when the boys were new. Then came a class of small girls making big wool balls. Another of bigger girls making dish cloths with big pins and thick white wool. A class of boys were doing chip-carving: this class is evidently in great favour for, standing outside the hall, one of these boys passed me and was asked by some big lads lounging in the doorway, "What yer goin in for?" "Oh," replied this boy drawing himself up, "I go to do wood-carving." The next class of small boys had been rather a difficulty. They were too big for scrapbooks and there was no room in other classes for them, but the idea of "cycle" cloths in the same coarse cotton, as before mentioned, proved sufficiently dignified for their self-respect, and one boy, who had finished a cloth, held up with pride smaller pins and red wool—a comforter. Then two classes of girls were hemming dusters and glass-cloths, and dressing dolls (each garment to come on and off). This time two or three of the dolls have not had to have their clothes washed, which is a great achievement!

To get clean hands and faces and brushed hair has been a matter of time and patience in all the classes, but the idea of these things being a gift which the children can bring, a

few words of encouragement and a bit of bright ribbon for a once shaggy head—these things have worked wonders. Three marks are given—one for punctuality, one for cleanliness, and one for order, and the loss of many marks which was at first inevitable (even such excuses as—father was drunk and I could'nt get no soap) are becoming things of the past. The instruction night falls on one Thursday in each month and draws quite as many children. A special attempt is made on these to give the children ideas which shall take them out of their sordid surroundings and give them interest in the children of other lands. Great stress is laid on the *gifts* of order, cleanliness, attention, etc. One talk I heard was on *I am, I can, I ought, I will*, given with simple illustrations; another was a lantern lecture, another the description of a journey across Africa. Every effort is made to get variety, within certain limits, and it is found that these "talks" are also useful in uniting the helpers in one common aim.

Besides *giving*, in the way of behaviour, the children have the pleasure of knowing that the dolls, balls, and scrapbooks go to the children of other lands, and that the rest of the work, when sold, goes to buy for these children advantages in the way of teaching, doctoring, etc., which *they* can have for nothing, and which these and other children do not have as a matter of course.

The band has been working in its present state for two sessions, and with gain to all concerned.

The children are becoming obedient, attentive and clean and their interest in the work never seems to flag.

The question of helpers has not been difficult; some of them are highly-qualified men and women; while others, for the love of it, have been content to work with the children under the more qualified teacher until they too have been able to teach some craft. The materials for the various classes are almost all given by friends, so that the expenses are very small. There are no prizes given, but once in the session the children are all invited to tea—a tea with nice white tablecloths and flowers and *teapots*, and many tables and bread and butter, with hundreds and thousands of plates from which you help yourself. After tea there is a magic lantern and the children recite.

There seems no end to the possibilities of such work as

this, and I believe the secret of the success lies in the fact that it gives fitting occupation to the three parts of a child's nature.

With my body I eat and work,
With my mind I think and learn,
With my spirit I love and believe.

NORFOLK NOTES.

The month of May is a delightful and busy season anywhere in the Island for the "Nature walker," but particularly so in Norfolk, the county par excellence for birds, beasts and flowers. In our daily walks, we find it a regrettable circumstance that we have short necks, imperfect hearing and sight, only two hands, and feet that *will* tread on snappy twigs, leaves and other noise-producing agents. We study Hiawatha in the hope of discovering some method of apprising our friends the beasts of our good intentions towards them. We avoid pointing at creatures of any kind, for they resent it quite as much as "humans." In our favourite haunts we are becoming known to the furred and feathered folk, and do not create so great a disturbance as formerly. An interfering jay, whose chief employment seems to be that of meddling with other people's affairs, croaks a warning to those plump fairies the rabbits whenever we go through the woods, and only the youngest and most adventurous remain until we get near. This jay has apparently gone to other parts, for last time we went to the rabbit colony we took them completely by surprise, and two wee youngsters tumbled over one another in their haste when we appeared in their midst. Now, alas! the woods are given over to those imperious creatures the pheasants, who sit in our favourite hedges and cause the presence of an obnoxious and altogether unnecessary evil called a "gamekeeper" in our pet hunting grounds.

We resign ourselves to an unkind fate and make long flower and bird lists in the meantime. The migrants have all

arrived here now, and we constantly see new birds. The garden rejoices in gold-finches, green-finches, bull-finches, blue-tits, great-tits, cole and marsh-tits, missel and song thrushes, wrens and blackbirds. Pheasants come over the hedge, and a large brown rat has taken up his abode there. The various bees which come to visit the wall-flowers are puzzling. A black bee with no markings of any description, another with orange tail, and a third with yellow stripes are the largest; then come smaller bees, some brown with yellow hairs on the thorax, some with orange tail, others silver striped with black. In the hedges outside are caterpillars innumerable. Outside is delirium. Which is best? to prowl along with eyes glued to the hedge for flowers and what the boys call "bugs," or to rush on tiptoe like Johnnie, head in air after the birds? It seems impossible to do both at once. Some birds for this month in our corner are—curlew, sand-piper, pewit, sedge warbler, nightingale, bull-finch, gold-finch, green-finch, cole-tit, swallow, martin, sand-martin, swift, missel-thrush, white throat, red-start, willow-warbler, cuckoo, wood-pigeon, and all the usual birds, such as chaffinch, hedge sparrow, blackbird, &c. Larks, both shore and sky, are everywhere possible. Flowers are legion. Appended is our list for May so far, it may interest some:—

Gorse.	Vernal Whitlow Grass.
Shepherd's Purse.	Barren Strawberry.
Red Dead Nettle.	Wild "
Garlic Mustard.	Tormentil.
Periwinkle.	Dandelion.
Common Chickweed.	Sow-thistle.
Mouse Ear "	Primrose.
Cerastium Arvense.	Wood Violet.
Groundsel.	Lungwort.
Water Crowfoot.	Thale Cress.
Petty Spurge.	Muscatel.
Germander Speedwell.	Coltsfoot.
Ivy-leaved "	Dog's Mercury.
Thyme-leaved "	Good King Hal.
Wall "	Field Hairy Woodrush.
Bugloss.	Lesser "
Lesser Celandine.	Common Bitter Cress.
Creeping Buttercup.	Cardamine Impatiens.
Goldilocks.	Ash.